

BOOK EXPOSING ERROR OF "LIMITED ATONEMENT" THEORY

December 29, 1999 (Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, wayoflife.org, fbns@wayoflife.org) - The following is by George Zeller, Associate Pastor, Middletown Bible Church, 349 East Street, Middletown, CT 06457. 203-346-0907 (voice), georgezeller@juno.com (e-mail) --

I would recommend the following book: James Morison, THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT, 1882, 170 pages. Influential work by Scottish "Low Calvinist." Deals with Biblical passages, history of the different positions, objections on both sides, etc. It is available from Good Books, 2456 Devonshire Rd., Springfield, IL 62703 (\$20.00 plus 10% postage).

The following may whet your appetite.

James Morison (nineteenth century author who wrote The Extent of the Atonement) argues that the doctrine of a limited atonement was never taught in the early centuries of church history. This is what he wrote:

"The doctrine of a propitiation for the elect alone is not yet above fourteen hundred years old. Such a doctrine was unheard of during the glorious first three centuries of the Christian era. Nay, it was not known for about two hundred years after that. This surely is a striking fact, and should make some men pause and ponder before they condemn. 'I think,' says the illustrious Bishop Davenant, a divine most intimately versed in ecclesiastical history and the writings of the Fathers, 'that it may be truly affirmed, that before the dispute between Augustine and Pelagius, there was no question concerning the death of Christ, whether it was to be extended to all mankind, or to be confined only to the elect. For the Fathers, when speaking of the death of Christ, describe it to us as undertaken and endured for the redemption of the human race; and not a word (that I know of) occurs among them of the exclusion of any person by the decree of God. They agree that it is actually beneficial to those only who believe, yet they everywhere confess that Christ died in behalf of all mankind.' [He then quotes from Clemens Alexandrinus, Origen, Primasius, Athanasius and Prosper]."

Here is Morison's comment on 1 Corinthians 15:3 --

"Here, then, you have an inspired definition of the object of saving faith-the gospel. It is not merely, 'Christ is able, infinitely able, to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him;' but it is, 'Christ died for OUR sins, according to the Scriptures.' Some have ventured to assert that no man is warranted, till after a long life of holiness, to say, 'Christ died for me;' and preachers have been told by other preachers that they have no right to say to any man, 'Christ died for you.' It appears, however, that the apostle Paul was of another mind, for he had no scruples in rising up amid the Corinthians, while they were yet heathens and unbelievers, and boldly proclaiming, not merely 'Christ died for MY sins,' but 'Christ died for OUR sins' (that is, for your sins, ye heathen Corinthians, and for mine), according to the Scriptures."

Here is Morison's comment on 1 Timothy 2:4-6 --

"It will be admitted that Nero was the principal ruler then existing, 'the king,' or emperor, contemplated by the apostle in the passage before us [Nero reigned from 54 to 68 A.D.]. Now Nero lived and died a disgrace to all human nature. He was the personified aggregate of all that is savage, disgusting, wicked, and base. Yet it was for this Nero that Christians were enjoined to pray; and to pray because God willed even this Nero to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth, and because for even this Nero did Christ give Himself a ransom. O how evident is it that 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, to give himself a ransom for ALL!' Reader, God loved you and Nero! Jesus gave himself a ransom for Nero and for you. You are but Nero in miniature, and under restraint;

see that you do not, Nero-like, despise the 'riches of grace,' and thus be also Nero-like in your doom!"

Here is Morison's comment on 2 Peter 2:1 --

"Nothing, O sinner, can be clearer than this,--Jesus Christ has bought you with his precious blood; he paid the price of his blood for your deliverance. But it does not necessarily follow that you shall be delivered. You may, notwithstanding, plunge the dagger of unbelief into your own soul, and 'bring upon yourself swift destruction.' If you perish, however, you will be a suicide,--the assassin of your own spirit. The price is paid for you, the blood is shed for you, the work is finished for you, the righteousness is wrought out for you, the glory is waiting for you; but it lies with yourself whether or not you will believe all this, and God's love infolded in it, or count it all 'the baseless fabric of a vision,' and forcibly effect your own murder and damnation. O see that you 'deny not the Lord that bought you'!"

Here is Morison's argument to the effect that universal terms are never used in connection with the doctrine of election:

"I would argue the universality of the propitiation from the fact, that its extent is spoken of by the inspired writers in language very different from what they employ when they speak of election, justification, sanctification, or glorification . . . They speak of Christ making propitiation for 'men,' for 'all men,' for 'every man,' for 'the world,' for 'the whole world,' and even for 'them who deny him, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.' But where do they speak of God electing 'men,' 'all men,' 'every man,' 'the world,' 'the whole world,' and even 'them who deny Christ, and bring upon themselves swift destruction'? Where do they speak of God justifying, sanctifying, and glorifying, 'men,' 'all men,' 'every man,' 'the world,' 'the whole world,' and even 'them who deny Christ, and bring upon themselves swift destruction'?"

Jay Adams once made this statement (Competent to Counsel, page 70): "As a reformed Christian, the writer believes that counselors must not tell any unsaved counselee that Christ died for him, for they cannot say that. No man knows except Christ himself who are his elect for whom he died"

One of the greatest missionaries would strongly differ with Jay Adams. The following is related by James Morison:

"One of the greatest missionaries of modern times [Mr. Moffat], one of the most gifted, one of the most devoted, one of the most honoured and successful, when asked by me somewhere about the year 1841, what gospel he preached to his poor Africans, replied that it was a maxim with him and his true yoke-fellows, to tell all and sundry that Christ died for them" [see Morison, *The Extent of the Atonement*, p. 112].

Also of interest:

"The noted commentator Albert Barnes (1798-1870) was an American Presbyterian preacher and Bible expositor. In 1835 he was brought to trial by the Second Presbytery of Philadelphia for his belief in unlimited atonement, but was acquitted. The case continued to stir the denomination and was one of the causes of the split in the Presbyterian church in the United States in 1837."

See The Wycliffe Biographical Dictionary of the Church, p. 29. It's interesting to read Barnes' comments under such passages as John 3:16; John 1:29; Heb. 2:9; 1 Tim. 2:4-6; 1 John 2:2.

My friend, Christ died for you. Believe it because it is surely true! Reject this message of His all-embracing love shown at the cross and you will suffer eternal death, everlasting punishment and terrible loss!